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”... And Then Some”

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“ . . . And Then Some ”

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IT MUST have been the name that drew me to that particular shop. From the outside it certainly didn't appear any different from the others. It stood in a long line of tired shabby little shops on a narrow street that time had apparently forgotten.

Modest, weathered signs listed the stores' contents to be books, or antiques, or second-hand items, or maybe magicians' supplies, or even novelties and junk. But in fading gilt, the sign in front of this shop said, "Anything under the sun, and then some."

Perhaps this shop would have what I had been searching for for such a long time. I peered through the window, grimy with dust. It was apparently stacked to the bursting point with every thing imaginable. The door creaked as I opened it and stepped inside. As the door eased shut behind me, I expected the usual jangle of bells to announce my presence, but instead the signal sounded very much like a meadowlark.

I stood on the threshold, letting my eyes adjust to the dimness. Yes, perhaps I had indeed come to the right place. Ahead of me, a great island of shelving arose, stacked with odd shapes. The counter was at the back, with an aisle disappearing behind it, perhaps to a storage room or basement. Another tier of shelves hugged the perimeter of the shop. Some of the items overflowed the shelves in places and were in boxes and bags on the floor, or hanging on pegs on the walls.

It was very quiet — I could hear the ticking of a grandfather clock somewhere. In spite of dust and dimness, the shop didn't have the usual musty smell old shops do. I realized that I was the only one in the store. Well, the proprietor would appear in good time. I stepped to the shelves nearest me and began to browse.

Some china vases caught my attention first. They were flanked by numerous glass figurines and a few items of jade. The shelf above was cluttered with a long row of glass bottles, some quite old, in various hues. Then a dusty row of small glass jars caught my attention. I picked up one. It was labeled, "new-mown hay." I read some of the others—baking bread; autumn leaves burning; bacon frying; morning coffee; wild roses in bloom. Rings in the dust of the shelf indicated that some scents had apparently been sold.

I hiked my purse up on my shoulder and looked about me. There were some old wicker chairs over in one corner, draped with two sets of dusty harness bells. A few faded rainbows hung from a peg above them.

Then a shelf crammed with boxes of sounds caught my attention, and I moved over to it. I picked up a pastel blue box—"incoming tide: Galveston"—I held it to my ear. Yes, I could hear its faint murmur through the cardboard. Each box had a different hue and contained a different sound: babbling brook; leaves rustling; hoofbeats; rush-hour traffic; children's laughter.

I peered into a burlap bag from which a metal scoop jutted. The small sign read "picnic ants, red or black, 10¢/dozen." That's what they were, all right. An old wooden barrel stood next to it—Elbow Grease.

I passed an unimpressive array of clocks and stood before a rather shopworn, shabby pile of clouds. "Assorted

rain clouds—\$1.00 each.” The lightning bolts were in a basket next to it at only 2 for 25¢.

I worked my way around to the other side of the shelves. The top shelf held dreams in flour-like cannisters. My knees felt warm. I looked down. A soft, warm glow came from the bottom shelf. Sunshine! In big gallon jugs, neatly labeled by months.

Off by itself was a pigeon-hole affair containing glass cylinders with stoppers. Winds, sorted and cross referenced—sea breeze, Atlantic, light; sea breeze, Atlantic, medium; from the dust and cobwebs on the one marked “hurricane,” it had apparently been undisturbed for years.

I was just beginning to sort through a stack of roads and trails when I heard footsteps behind me. A little clerkish old man came toward me, silk slippers scuffing softly. Blue eyes regarded me with interest over his wire rimmed spectacles. His round balding head was a perfect match with his round figure which was straining to escape the confines of his rather old fashioned black serge suit.

“May I help you, miss?” he asked in a high, quavery voice. “I hope you haven’t been waiting long—I was unpacking stock—hearing isn’t what it used to be. Oh, I bet you’ve come about our special sale on sunsets—I’m sorry, missy, but we’re all sold out—since ten o’clock this morning. We have a few sunrises left though.”

“That isn’t why I came.”

“Oh, then perhaps I can help you with something!” He folded his hands on the wooden counter and beamed at me.

“Well, uh, I’d like to buy some time. Do you have any?”

“Do we! All kinds of time. What sort of time do you want, missy?”

“I don’t know really.”

"Perhaps it would help if I mentioned some of them?" I nodded.

"Well there's good times, bad times . . ." he began to tick them off on his fingers. "Oh, not that kind of time. Well, let's see, there's daytime, nighttime, standard time, mealtime, daylight saving time. . . . How about Greenwich Mean Time? That's the very best time there is, none better."

"Well, you see, I'm a student, and I need some extra time to study—there isn't enough time to get all my school-work done."

"My, my, you don't say," he clucked sympathetically. Then I'd recommend study time. What hours would you like? I'm assuming this would be at night."

"Yes, eight to ten is best. How much does it cost?"

"Let's see . . ." he fumbled through some papers and peered closely at a yellowed chart. "Let's see—\$1.00 an hour."

"Really? Ah, let me have ten hours I guess. I may be back for some more later."

"Fine, fine." He picked up a roll of time from below the counter and measured off ten hours. "And a little bit more—wouldn't want to short you any." He snipped it off with a pair of scissors and folded the time carefully, then slipped it into a brown sack.

"There you are, missy." He placed the parcel in one of my hands. "Do come back again now."

"I will. Thank you. Quite a nice shop you have here." Then I turned and headed toward the door. As I opened the door to step outside, the meadow lark sang goodbye.